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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4153
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 7252
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 2158
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 1686
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON PRIORITY 2227
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 3311
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TAGS: PREL AU BM RS KNNP IAEA JP

SUBJECT: JAPAN RESPONDS TO RUSSIA-BURMA NUCLEAR DEAL

REF: STATE 72586

Classified By: DCM Joe Donovan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On May 30, EST Officer delivered points in reftel to Satoshi Kikuchi of the Non-Proliferation, Science and Nuclear Energy Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Kikuchi said that Japan shares many of the U.S. concerns about the announced Russia-Burma civil nuclear agreement, and is "watching it carefully" from the perspective of non-proliferation, safety, and security. However, he said that Japan has no plans to express its concerns publicly, but rather will continue to urge the Burmese in private discussions to "play by the rules" with their IAEA commitments. Kikuchi mentioned that Burma has not approved the IAEA Safeguards Additional Protocol, and that Japan has raised this with the Burmese. Kikuchi added that Burma would need to renounce the Small Quantities Protocol (SQP) from the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement if it wished to develop a nuclear reactor.

¶2. (C) On approaching Russia with Japan's concerns, Kikuchi brushed aside any urgency, responding that Russia has indicated to Japan that the deal is very much in the initial phase.

¶3. (C) Comment: Japan's initial response suggests that it is balancing concerns over the nuclear risks of the Russia-Burma deal with its own regional and bilateral interests. Its approach in dealing with Burma on this agreement appears consistent with that on other sensitive issues. Japan has been notably reluctant to join U.S. and European allies in publicly criticizing Burma's human rights record, seeing instead an important role for itself in staying actively engaged with an increasingly isolated Burma, particularly as a counterweight to China. With Russia, Japan may tread cautiously in raising concerns about the Burma nuclear deal, as Japan itself is in discussions with Russia on a civil nuclear agreement that would include Russia enriching uranium from Japan's spent nuclear fuel stored in Europe for eventual use in Japanese reactors. (Nuclear power provides roughly 30% of Japan's electricity needs). Embassy contacts at the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) have said that a potential deal with Russia may also include commercial opportunities for Japanese firms to participate in Russia's nuclear energy expansion plans. End Comment.

SCHIEFFER